



The 5 Interactions Chart

First Edition

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Introduction

What is the 5 interactions chart? Before we get to that, I would like to give a brief introduction on the origin and purpose of this theory. You may skip ahead if you're not interested.

This is a theory I have been nurturing for a while but couldn't really put into words. Originally, my idea only included 3 of the interactions you will see further ahead, which ended up being too theoretical to be of any real use. It's essentially my take on one of the intangible and subjective aspects of every fighting game. I don't believe this to be 100% accurate nor applicable for every person, but it's my best attempt at exposing my knowledge in the best way possible.

For the question on how I came up with the ideas for this, the answer is quite simple: experience and observation. Questioning what made a player strong and why a strong player could consistently lose to a seemingly weaker opponent is what drove me to the answers. The rest derives from my own experience and learning from countless games and players.

The purpose of this "thesis" is to help players formulate an effective plan and strategy. I personally follow the commandments exposed further ahead and it has helped me make sense of what it is I did or am doing wrong, beyond tactical mistakes or simple interactions (e.g., missing a tap charge). I should clarify that I use the expression **tactic** to refer to a step with which you fulfill a certain plan – a **strategy**.

I should also add that most of what is explained here is already a part of any top player's knowledge, though intuitively. However, I think understanding these concepts formally should help both newer players and seasoned players alike. The ability to perceive what is going on in the game, beyond just your general senses, will hopefully promote the rapid growth of players and bring relief to those who find themselves in a rut.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. – AL

The Chart

Let's get down not business. What is this chart and what are the 5 interactions?

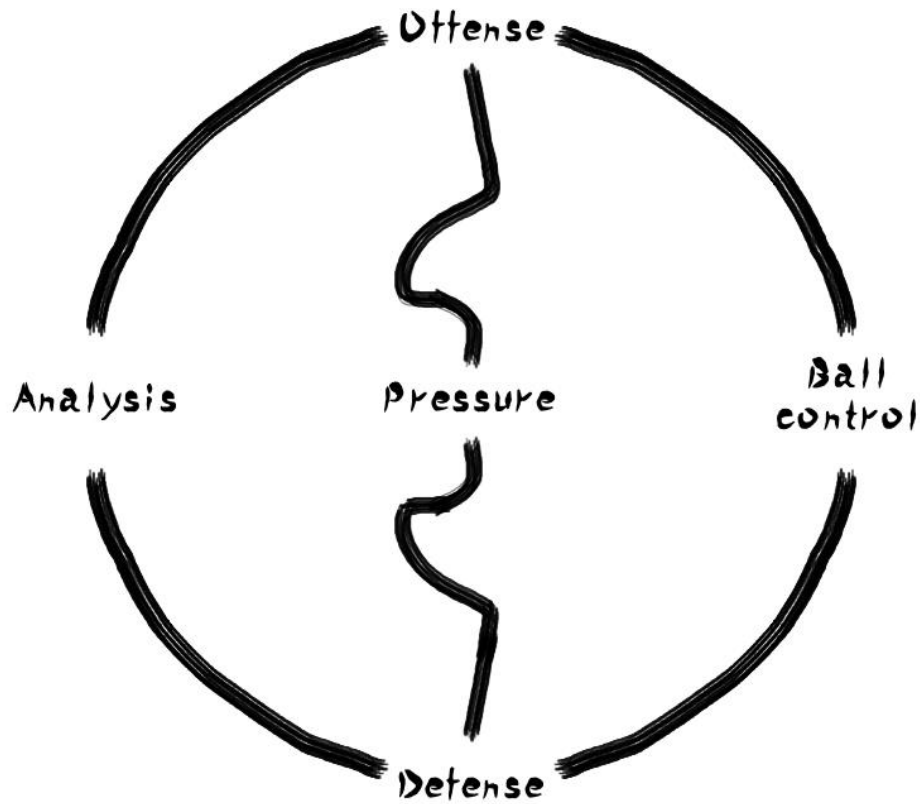


Fig.1 - The central chart exposing the 5 interactions and their connections.

Most of the people I showed this chart to had a basic sense of what it was, but would ultimately ask the question “Ok, but what does it mean?”

Allow me to explain. You have 2 main interactions – **offense** and **defense**. On top of that, you have your multipliers or secondary interactions – **pressure**, **analysis** and **ball control**.

Offense and defense are the main interactions because, as you might have guessed, they are the ones that will ultimately allow you to hit your opponent and survive your opponent's attacks.

As for why certain interactions are connected and others aren't, it is simple but requires a bit more effort to explain.

Interactions that are directly connected are **easier** to synergize. On the other hand, interactions that are further away from each other are **harder** to apply simultaneously.

The inverse is also true. Utilizing far apart interactions serve as "counters" for one another (e.g., pressure can be a good way to deal with your opponent's ball control, but good ball control can also be a good way to escape or take advantage of your opponent's pressure.)

As you can see, all secondary interactions are far apart from each other. On top of that, offense and defense are also far apart.

To provide an example, consider the following situations:

- A player who is good at offense will have an easy time introducing pressure into his playstyle. However, it would be hard to focus on both offense and defense simultaneously.
- A player who is good at maintaining ball control, either offensively or defensively, would have a harder time analyzing their opponent's patterns while focusing on expanding and maintaining ball control. The same can be said for pressuring their opponent. It would be almost contradictory to focus on keeping the ball and applying pressure at the same time (this isn't necessarily the case, though.)

What differentiates a new, competent and proficient player comes down to a myriad of different factors, such as technical ability, angle knowledge and intuition. But it can also be seen as the ability to juggle more of the interactions simultaneously and with a higher level with competence. The ability to adapt, or in other words, quickly shifting the focus to specific interactions, also plays a big role.

I would say that most players with a higher degree of ability and skill in the game can utilize at least 3 of these interactions simultaneously, without too many drawbacks. This, of course, isn't necessarily true. You could have a player who is so

competent at 2 of these interactions that they can rely on them to compensate for other weaknesses (e.g., A player very strong in offense and pressure).

On a final note, the nature and effects of each interaction, especially secondary interactions, is different depending on which interactions you pair them with (e.g., offensive analysis and defensive analysis are very different things).

The 5 interactions

Let's take a more in-depth look at what each of the interactions mean and how they can be utilized. Do note that all of these interactions have a lot of nuances and subcategories, which I won't be covering here.

Offense -

This is one of the main interactions. It's purpose is quite straight-forward: it's the ability to produce threats and strong attacks.

Offensive options come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and vary extensively depending on the player, stage, character and opponent. I won't bother to list every possible offensive tactic and option, since that is neither the purpose of this guide, nor is it something I could accurately do at this point in time. However, just to give a few examples, you could do pre-defined setups, special setups, reaction checks, timing mixups, angle kills, parry baits, conditioning, grab mixups, steal baits, steals, forced downbunt kills, etc. All these options are often the consequence of applying different interactions on top of offense and, as such, provide different synergies with specific interactions.

Don't be fooled into thinking offense only applies when you have the ball. Your offensive options may differ depending on whether you have the ball or not, but they still exist even when the opponent has ball possession. A few examples of this would be ball steals (offense and pressure), parry grabs (offense and analysis) and charged hits (offense, defense and analysis).

Defense –

Being the second main interaction, defense is equally easy to understand: it is the ability to survive your opponent's attacks.

Defense is often neglected, compared to offense. This is most likely because developing good defense requires more time, experience and study outside of the game. On top of that, defensive play is often not as exciting as offensive play, but that is up to each player.

Similarly to offense, you have many defensive tactics. I won't name them all, but tap charging, rising bunts, falling bunts, spike coverage, safezoning... are some of the more commonly used tactics.

Good defense isn't just surviving though. It's the ability to survive and convert that into ball possession. In the end, you can't win unless you hit your opponent (unless your strategy is to frustrate them into quitting the match.)

Your defense also changes depending on whether or not you have possession of the ball. When you don't have the ball, the simplest way to categorize defense is either into active (defense and pressure) and passive (defense and analysis) defense. When you do have the ball, playing defensively can also be beneficial. Using isolation tactics AKA ball hogging (defense and ball control) or forcing your opponent to defend in ways that enable you to recover ball control easily after hitlag (defense, offense and analysis) can be very efficient and frustrating ways to deal with your opponents.

Pressure –

The purpose behind pressuring your opponent is different from the previous interactions: it is the ability to prevent your opponent from doing what he wants and forcing them into making mistakes.

A pressuring playstyle can be very intimidating for your opponent. Essentially, it's a way of communicating you aren't going to allow them to play their own game. However, pressure is also a double-edged sword. Apply too much of it and you'll get burned. Using it as a crutch for a lack of defense ability is a common pattern in newer players.

It is easy to see how you can apply it in both offense and defense. You could force your opponent to give up their ball control, put yourself in a favorable position, push them into a corner or get them stuck in a loop of continuous hard to deal with attacks. You can either choose to leap on top of your opponent or slowly strangle them when you apply pressure.

A word of caution – players often think pressure and offense are the optimal way to play the game. I disagree. I think it's definitely a strong option, but it has its downfalls. For example, it might be a good way to deal with players who have good offense and ball control (commonly known as tech heavy players), but if your opponent has a good understanding of analysis or just outright better ball control,

you might be in trouble.

Analysis –

This one might be a bit misleading: analysis is the ability to foresee your opponent's options or even correctly predicting their next action.

Analysis stems from the understanding of your opponent's options and tendencies at any given moment. The more experienced you are at it, the faster you will be able to analyze a situation and diminish the need to react. If you know what's coming, it will be much easier to deal with. It is also a must if your reaction time isn't all that great, especially in matches with high ping.

Conditioning and picking up on your opponent's biases are just some of the ways you can apply this interaction while playing. It will directly impact the effectiveness of both your offense and defense.

Analysis is also one of the hardest interactions to get the hang of. It grows with experience playing the game and taking the time to look through matches outside the game.

Be careful though. Analysis is NOT guessing. You might be compelled to believe going for 50/50s is a pure form of analysis, but this is far from the truth. Going inside your opponent's hitbox and taking a guess at whether they will parry or not might be, in part, conditioning, but it's ultimately a pressure + analysis tactic. It's also a way to compensate for your actual lack of analysis and defense, since you were either unable to foresee a situation and act accordingly. Since pressure and defense are far apart in the chart, you can probably understand how it is risky to use this tactic and how it can become an uphill battle in and of itself.

Ball control –

Finally, we have ball control. This interaction is perhaps the most unusual one compared to other fighting games, being specific only to Lethal League and Lethal League Blaze: it's the ability retain ball possession, as well as using it efficiently.

Ball control allows you to change your own position in order to create new threats or keep your adversaries away, all the while leaving your opponents weary to

approach and unable to predict your next moves. It can also be used to incite a specific reaction out of your opponent, though this seeps into the realm of analysis.

Ball control is essential to most playstyles. The ability to not drop the ball after a single bunt or chain of hits is essential. On top of that, throwing away ball control in exchange for a weak attack is also a bad move.

With that said, ball control doesn't necessarily have to be fast. That can help, but it requires a lot more effort and training to reach that level. You will also have a harder time focusing on what your opponent is doing. That is why ball control and analysis are so hard to synergize.

Three common archetypes of players who are heavily influenced by ball control are combo or tech heavy players (ball control and offense), ball hogs (ball control and defense) and ball stealers (pressure, ball control and offense).

Practical usage

You don't necessarily have to actively think about these interactions while you play. As I said before, many strong players already do this intuitively. However, if you train yourself to spot these patterns (both inside the game or by analyzing games after the fact) and to quickly adapt to a certain situation, I whole heartedly believe you will see progress.

It's not that simple, though. Obviously, the perfect playstyle would be one where you can apply all 5 of the interactions at maximum output. But that is extremely hard, if not impossible. To exemplify, imagine a certain player, **X**, who has about 450 hours in the game.

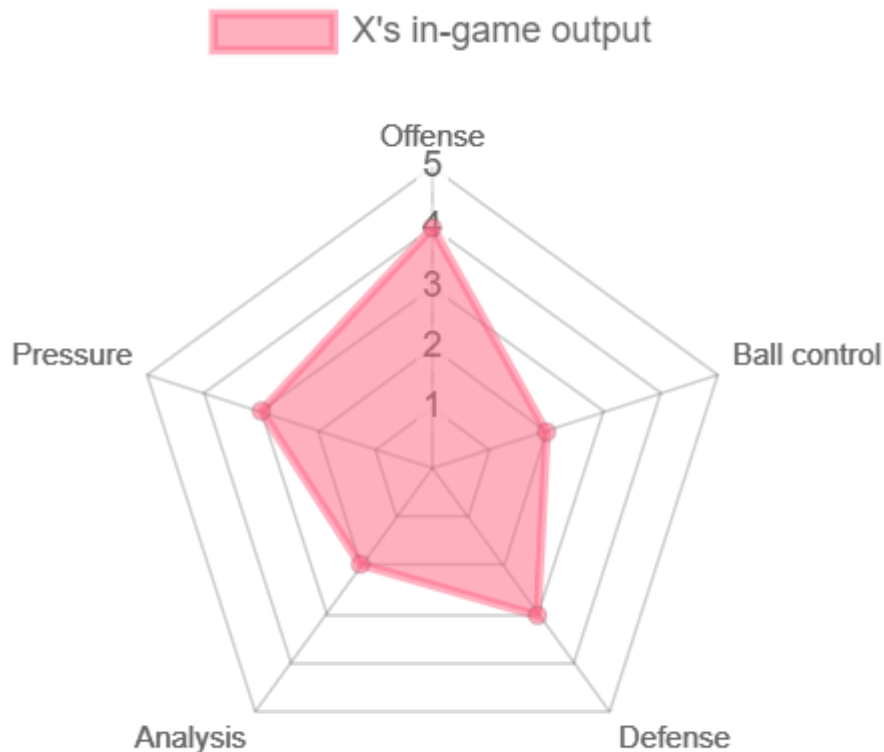


Fig. 2.1 – A simple radar chart with **X**'s current in-game interaction

X is currently playing against an opponent of similar skill, **Y**. However, **Y** is taking quite a few games over **X**.

Realizing his current strategy isn't working, **X** tries to make sense of his own strengths, as well as **Y**'s. Currently, he is outputting a level of 4, 2, 3, 2 and 3 in Offense, Ball control, Defense, Analysis and Pressure (**OBDAP**), respectively. Meanwhile, he notices **Y** is particularly skilled at ball control, offense and pressure.

X knows he can do better. He has a maximum output of 4, 4, 4, 3 and 4 for his **OBDAP**, individually. As such, he decides to increase the in-game output of **ball control** from 2 to 4 and his **analysis** from 2 to 3. However, it doesn't work out as linearly as he had hoped!

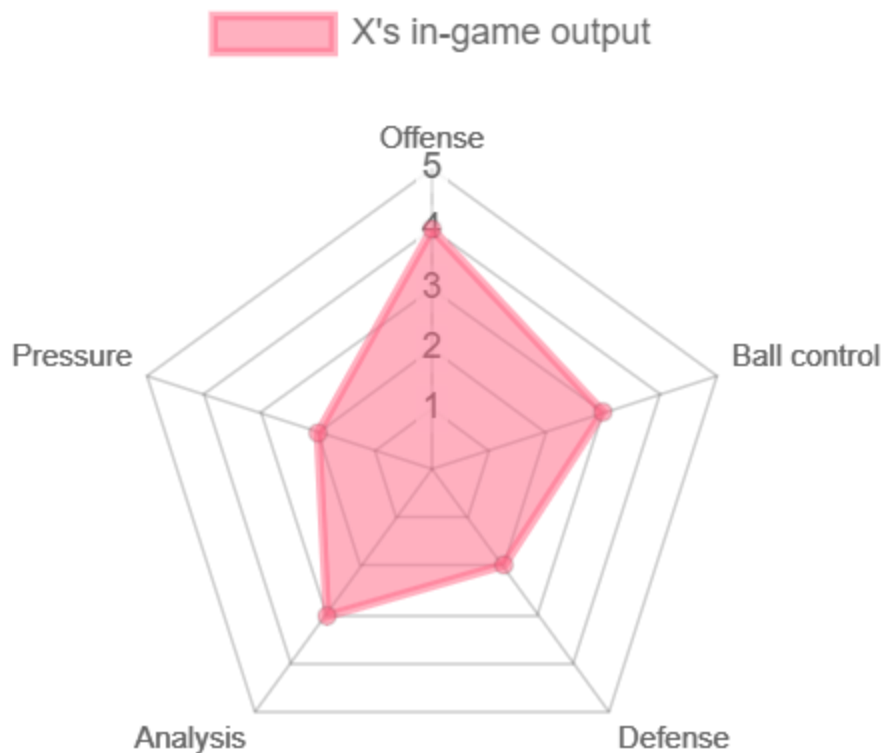


Fig. 2.2 – X's in-game interaction output after his

Because **X** attempted to increase 2 opposing interactions that are far apart, he ends up not being able to utilize them as well as he'd hoped. As such, instead of increasing his **ball control** to 4 and **analysis** to 3, the best he can do under these contradicting interactions is an output of 3 and 3. This is an improvement to what he had before. However, these also heavily influence his third secondary interaction, **pressure**, bringing it down from 3 to 2. Finally, his focus on maintaining ball control, while trying to analyze his opponent and still maintaining a sharp offensive ability, have made his **defense** come down from 3 to 2 as well.

Because of this, he ends up not being able to keep up with the strength of **Y**'s strong **offense** and **pressure** and ends up damaging his chances even further.

A better alternative might have been to bring down his **pressure** and focusing more on his **defense** and **analysis**. The analysis might help him deal with **Y**'s good **ball control** and **pressure**, while an increase in **defense** would have helped to protect himself from **Y**'s strong **offense**.

Now, hopefully you weren't too confused by that example, nor should you take it literally. We all know it's not that simple in practice, and we can also argue **X**'s initial plan also had a chance to work, but it gives us some insight into how we can apply all these concepts. The main idea to take away is that by pulling more toward his secondary interactions that clash with one another, **X** ended up sacrificing his already mediocre defense, leaving him defenseless against **Y**'s strong offense.

In order to improve, I recommend focusing on 3 main aspects.

1. Figuring out your strengths and weaknesses among the 5 interactions and cementing your own playstyle based on that.
2. Actively work towards improving your maximum output in each interaction, especially those you have a harder time with, as well as the amount you can output in-game.
3. Adapt to your opponent and situations, but never forget your own playstyle.

I hope this helps anyone looking to improve their game and try out a different perspective, or at the very least, provide an entertaining subject for discussion. Most of all, don't forget: "Practice hard, stay humble".